

Social Determinants of Health Information Sheet

Division of Prevention Research and Analytic Methods
Community-Based Participatory Action Research Activity

Social determinants of health (SDOH) are factors and resources essential to the health of communities and individuals. These include income, shelter, education, access to nutritious food, services, community norms and cohesion, and social justice.

Substantial evidence exists showing an association between social determinants and health; however, few disease-specific prevention programs or research projects examine these factors in an in-depth manner. Little research has been conducted to elucidate these relationships or to develop and test interventions to change them.

Study Variables included as Social Determinants of Health

- Policies and laws
- Violence
- Social gradient
- Social networks
- Culture
- Transportation
- Racism and other forms of discrimination
- Aggregate characteristics of neighborhoods
- Physical living conditions
- Education
- Income
- Norms
- Social support
- Social capital

ACTIVITIES

Examples of SDOH CDC/ATSDR Research and Activities:

Epidemiology Program Office (EPO) has identified SDOH as one of four research priorities for the next three years. Activities include:

- Funding three Urban Research Centers in Detroit, MI, New York, NY, and Seattle, WA to develop (or refine) and test conceptual models of the effects of social determinants on urban health.
- The Guide to Community Preventive Services, will contain a chapter on Sociocultural Environment. The chapter will include a logic framework to explain the relationship between six intermediate outcomes through which social determinants affect health. (See model next page).
- Conducting an inventory of Department of Health and Human Services-funded research projects that focus on SDOH.
- Establishing a cross-Centers, Institutes and Offices Social Determinants of Health working group.
- Collaborating with Public Health Program Practice Office, the Coalition of Healthier Cities and Communities, and other institutions, to develop a product for lay audiences describing the importance of social determinants affecting health in the U.S., based on the World Health Organization's (WHO), *The Solid Facts*.
- Collaborating with WHO and the Health Development Agency of England on *Theory and Action for Health*, a series of meetings with academics and practitioners to develop new models and strategies of influencing SDOH.
- Planning to conduct an SDOH literature review to identify gaps in methods and interventions.
- Planning to convene a group of outside experts to guide research on SDOH at CDC.

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion:

- Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health is funding 32 community coalitions to develop activities to reduce the level of disparity that affect racial and ethnic minorities. Projects are in the planning stages and some plan to include SDOH research.
- Prevention Research Centers (PRC) are currently funding a special interest project using an interdisciplinary approach, engaging communities as partners, to create a network of PRCs to develop and field test neighborhood level measures of protective social factors that have been empirically or theoretically associated with levels of health disparities.

Examples of NIH and WHO Research and Activities on SDOH:

- **National Institute of Health—Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, NIH, *Toward Higher Levels of Analysis: Progress and Promise in Research on Social and Cultural Dimensions of Health*, June 2000**
- **The World Health Organization** is increasingly recognizing the importance of addressing the full range of determinants of health, including social determinants, within several departments. For example, the Poverty and Health work group is exploring poverty eradication as a means of improving health.

RESOURCES

Literature

- Adler NE, Marmot M, McEwen BS, Stewart J (eds.) (1999). *Socioeconomic Status and Health in Industrial Nations: Social, Psychological, and Biological Pathways*. New York: New York Academy of Sciences.
- Berkman LF, Syme SL. Social networks, host resistance and mortality: a nine-year follow-up study of Alameda County residents. *American Journal of Epidemiology* 1979;109:186-204.
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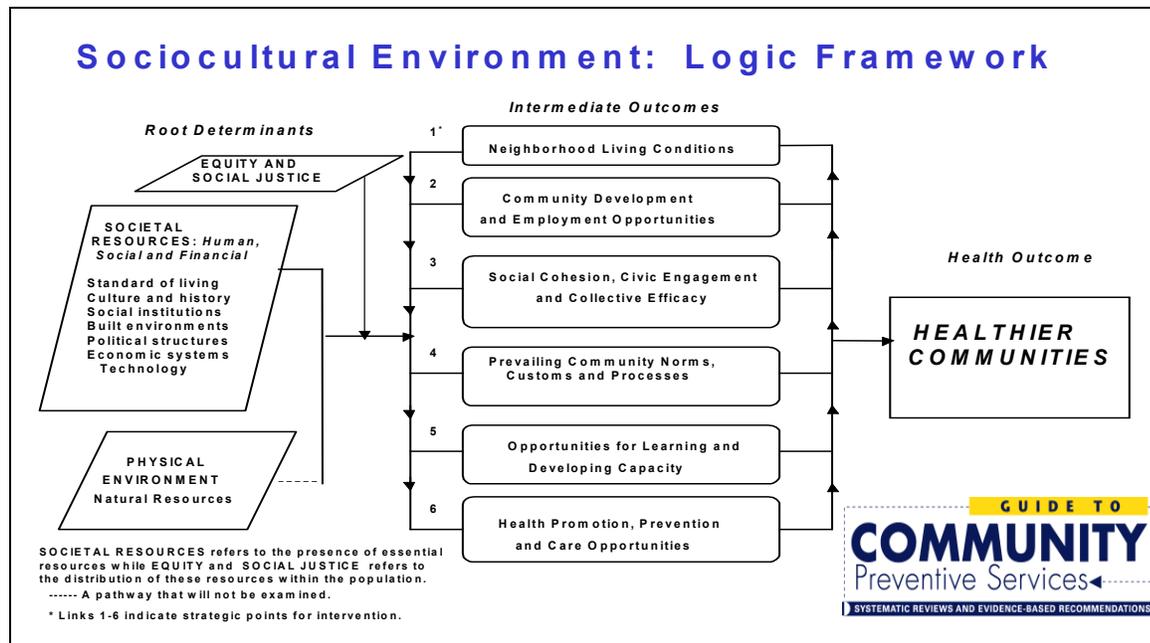
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- Wilkinson R, Marmot M (ed.) (1998). *Social Determinants of Health: The Solid Facts*. World Health Organization.
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- Smedly BD, Syme, SL (ed.) (2000). *Promoting health: Intervention strategies from social and behavioral research*. Institute of Medicine. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- See websites for more exhaustive lists of the literature.

Websites--United States

- The Guide to Community Preventive Services: www.thecommunityguide.org
- The University of Washington, Health and Income Equity: <http://depts.washington.edu/eqlhth/>
- Inequality.org: <http://www.inequality.org>
- Association for Health Services Research: <http://www.ahsr.org/rwjf/kawachi.htm>
- MacArthur Foundation: http://www.macfdn.org/research/hcd/hcd_7.htm

Websites--International

- University of Toronto: <http://www.utoronto.ca/qol/projects.htm>
- British Medical Journal, link to Collected Resources and scroll down to Socioeconomic Determinants of Health, under Non-Clinical and Epidemiology: www.bmj.com
- Health Variations Programme Web Page: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/apsocsci/hvp.htm>
- Department of Health, United Kingdom, Reducing Health Inequalities: <http://www.doh.gov.uk/ohn/inequalities.htm>
- Scottish Policy Net, link to Publications and scroll down to Strategies for Social Inclusion under Health Public Policy: <http://www.scottishpolicy.net.org.uk/>
- The World Bank Group: www.worldbank.org/poverty/inequal/links.htm



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